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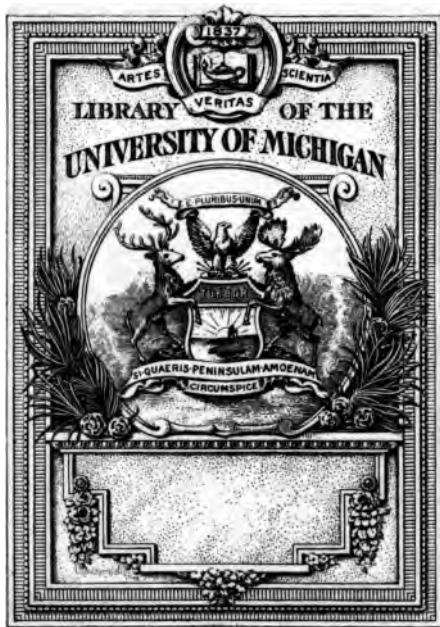
Letter

July 15

1893

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Price 40 cents

THE
SPANISH LETTER
OF
COLUMBUS

WRITTEN BY HIM ON FEB. 15, 1493

TO ANNOUNCE THE DISCOVERY

OF

AMERICA

REPRODUCED IN FACSIMILE FROM THE UNIQUE COPY
OF THE ORIGINAL EDITION

(Barcelona, April, 1493)

WITH A TRANSLATION AND
INTRODUCTION

LONDON

BERNARD QUARITCH

15 PICCADILLY

1893

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THE
SPANISH LETTER
OF
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COLUMBUS

TO
LUIS DE SANT' ANGEL

Escribano de Racion of the Kingdom of Aragon

DATED 15 FEBRUARY 1493

REPRINTED IN REDUCED FACSIMILE, AND TRANSLATED
FROM THE

UNIQUE COPY
OF THE ORIGINAL EDITION

(PRINTED BY JOHANN ROSENBACH AT BARCELONA
EARLY IN APRIL 1493)

LATELY
in the possession of
BERNARD QUARITCH
LONDON, 15 PICCADILLY

1893

LONDON :

G. NORMAN AND SON, PRINTERS, HART STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.



INTRODUCTION.

THE Latin letter of Columbus, although plainly indicated in its heading as a translation, was for centuries considered to be the only authentic account of his voyage derived from his own pen. The existence of the Spanish original in a printed text of the period was for the first time made known in 1856, when the quarto now in the Ambrosian library came to light, and it is only three years since the discovery of the still earlier Spanish folio, which has been acquired by the Lenox library from Mr. Quaritch. The importance of the Latin letter as a collateral and (in some instances) corrected document will not easily pass away; collectors and libraries will still bid enormous prices for such rare copies of any of the four editions which appeared in 1493, as may turn up from time to time.

The facsimile of the Latin letter now offered to the public is unaccompanied by an English version, because that work has already been done several times, notably by Mr. Eames of the Lenox library a few months ago; and also because the translation appended to the facsimile of the Spanish folio announced on the wrapper of the present letter, will serve as a translation for either. Nothing therefore remains to be said here except a few words with regard to the origin, dates, and succession of the first four editions of the Latin Columbus.

The Spanish folio was printed at Barcelona in April, 1493, probably before the middle of that month. The transmission of

copies from the Peninsula to the rest of Europe was not effected in the same manner as at present, when railway communication has made Paris the immediate recipient of Spanish traffic. Its ordinary course was by sea to Naples, where the dynasty of Aragon was reigning and where the languages of Catalonia, Valencia, and Castille were familiarly used. It was perhaps about the 22nd or 23rd of April, that the Barcelona letter reached Naples, and it was probably in that city, not in Spain, that the Spanish quarto of the Ambrosian library was reprinted from the Barcelona folio of the Lenox library. As for the Latin letter, its origin was slightly different. Columbus had addressed separate copies of the same narrative to two persons—the first to his friend Luis de Santangel, King Ferdinand's financial secretary, the second (which, from the very fact that it was secondary, contained some corrections and some errors) to Gabriel Sanxis, the Treasurer of Aragon. As the text in both was almost identical, there was no occasion to print the one addressed to Sanxis after that to Santangel had issued from the press of Johann Rosenbach at Barcelona. In any case, for whatever reason, the Spanish text so inscribed was never printed until Varnhagen gave it from a manuscript in 1858. But it was a copy, undoubtedly in MS., of the Sanxis letter, which reached the hands of Leandro de Cosco in Naples somewhere about the 23rd or 24th of April, 1493, and was rendered by him into Latin in the version which was printed four times in 1493, and has been frequently reprinted since. This Leandro was a subject of the kingdom of Aragon as his appellation shows, Cosco being a small town in Lerida not far from Balaguer. The natural jealousy between Aragon and Castille accounts for his evidently wilful omission of Isabel's name in the heading of his translation. He presented the work to Leonardus, Bishop of the Neapolitan see of Monte Peloso, a prelate of Catalonian birth, whose family name appears elsewhere Latinised as "de Carninis," but who called himself "Leonardus de Corbaria," because his native place was Corbaria (now called Corbière), a town on the frontiers of Aragon and Roussillon. The Bishop, who was no less patriotic and prejudiced than Leandro, carried the translation to Rome with

him, and, having added to it some verses enthusiastically laudatory of his sovereign Ferdinand (but ignoring the Queen of Castille, to whom Columbus was so much indebted, and whom he never forgot in writing about "Their Highnesses"), he gave it to Stephan Planck to print. Planck, who was a priest as well as a printer, produced an impression (in small quarto size, four leaves with thirty-four lines to each full page) which was published early in May, 1493. [One copy of that edition is in the Lenox library; another in the Boston library.] In the usual course of transmission to the North, which was almost always from Rome to Cologne, by the river-way from Basel, a copy of Planck's first edition reached the latter city and was there reprinted with pictorial illustrations in wood-engraving (in small quarto size, ten leaves, with twenty-seven lines to each full page). This Basel edition is very rare, and the only perfect copy known is in the Lenox library. Two reprints of the same text were also published in Paris by Gui Marchant; both probably in 1493 but dateless. Before this time, Planck had been reproved by Castilians in Rome for having produced a book so pointedly injurious to the credit of Queen Isabel. He therefore printed a second edition (small quarto, four leaves, thirty-three lines to each full page) in which Leander's words "invictissimi Fernandi Hispaniarum Regis" were altered to "invictissimorum Fernandi et Helisabet Hispaniarum Regum," Isabel and Ferdinand, although wife and husband, being equally sovereigns, the one of Castille and Leon, the other of Aragon. The name of the Treasurer, which had appeared in Planck's first edition as Raphael Sanxis, by error for Gabriel Sanxis, was altered, correctly from Raphael to Gabriel, but incorrectly from Sanxis to Sanchis. The Catalonian name Sanxis (pronounced Sanshis) had a Castilian correlative in Sanchez, and if it was necessary to make a Castilian of the Treasurer he ought to have been transmuted into Gabriel Sanchez. But the Castilianisers evidently objected merely to Ferdinand *solus* and to the Aragonese x in Sanxis; so that Planck's second edition when it came out had still the Catalonian *i* after the Castilian *ch*. Hence when another

edition was required, later in the same year, it was printed by Franck or Silber of Rome (who called himself Eucharius Argenteus) with two further corrections. "Fernandi et Helisabet" became "Fernandi ac Helisabet" and "Sanchis" was turned into "Sanches"; and a word on the third page, which is "noverant" in the other three editions, is properly corrected into "neverant." Generally, however, Silber's edition is less intelligently printed than the others, and the best of the four is, on the whole, the one here given in facsimile. Silber's edition is the only one of the four which is dated and inscribed. Planck's two editions and the Basel edition, bear neither name nor date. Silber's has his name "Argenteus" with place and date given as "Rome . . . M . cccc . xcijj". It is in small quarto, four leaves, with forty lines to each full page; and a copy is to be found in the Lenox library at New York.



Epistola Christofori Colom: cui etas nostra multū debet: de Insulis Indie supra Gangem nuper inuētis. Ad quas pergrandas octauo ante a mense auspiciis etere inuictissimoꝝ Fernādi et Helisabet Hispaniaꝝ Regū missus fuerat: ad magnificum dñm Gabrielem Sanchis eorundē serenissimoꝝ Regum Tesaurariū missa: quā nobilis ac litteratus vir Leander de Cosco ab Hispano idiomate in latinum cōvertit tertio kal's Maii. M.cccc.xciii Pontificatus Alexandri Sexti Anno p̄imo.

Quoniam suscepit prouincie rem perfectam me p̄secutum fuisse gratum tibi fore scio: has constitui exarare: que te vniuersitatem rei in hoc nostro itinere geste inuenienteq; admoneant: Tricesimotertio die postꝝ Gadibus discessi in mare Indicū perueni: vbi plurimas insulas innumeris habitatas hominibus repperi: quarum omnium pro felicissimo Rege nostro preconio celebrato et vexillis extensis contradicente nemine possessionem accepi: primeq; earum divi Salvatoris nomen imposui: cuius fretus auxilio tam ad hanc: q̄ ad ceteras alias peruenimus. Eam ꝑ Indi Guanabanin vocant. Aliarū etiam vnam quancq; nono nomine nuncupauit: quippe aliā insulam Sancte Marie Conceptionis. aliam Fernandinam. aliam Dysabellam. aliam Joanam. et sic de reliquis appellari iussi. Cum primum in eam insulam quam dudum Joanam vocari dixi appulimus: iuxta eius littus occidentem versus aliquantulum processi: tamq; eam magnam. nullo reperto fine inueni: vt non insulā: sed continentem Chatai prouinciam esse crediderim: nulla tñ videntis opida municipiaue in maritimis sita confirmibꝝ preter aliquos viacos et predia rustica: cum quoꝝ incolis loqui nequibam. quare si mulac nos videbant surripiebant fugam. Progrediebar vltreas existimans aliquā me urbem villasue inuenturū. Deniq; videntis q̄ longe admodum progressis nibil noui emergebat: et hmoi via nos ad Septentrionem deferebat: q̄ ipse fugere exoptabā: terribet enim regnabat bruma: ad histrumq; erat in yoto cōtendere:

nec minus venti flagitantibꝫ succedebat constitui alios nō ope
riri successus: tꝫ sic retrocedens ad portū quendā quem signane
ram sum reuersus: vnde duos hoies ex nostris in terrā misi: qui
inueniagarēt esset ne Rex in ea prouincia vrbesue aliue. Hi per
tres dies ambularunt inueniētqꝫ numeros populos tꝫ habita
tiones: paruas tñ t abscqꝫ villo regimine. quapropter redierunt.
Interea ego iam intelleceram a qbnsdam Indis quos ibidē su
scepereā quō hñdī prouincia insula quidem erat: tꝫ sic perreti ori
entem versus eius semp stringēs littora vscqꝫ ad miliaria. cccxxii
vbi ipsius insule sunt extrema: binc alia insulam ad orientē pro
spexi distantē ab hac Joana miliaribꝫ. lllii. quā protius Hispa
nam dixi: in eamqꝫ concessi tꝫ directi iter quasi per Septentrionē
quemadmodum in Joana ad orientē miliaria. dlxiiii. que dicta
Joana t alie ibidē insule q̄fertilissime existunt. Hec multis atqꝫ
tutissimis t latiss nec aliis quos vñqꝫ viderim cōparandis por
tibus est circundata. multi maximi t salubres hanc interfluunt
fluvii: multi quoqꝫ t eminentissimi in ea sunt montes. Omnes
he insule sunt pulcherrime t variis distincte figuris: puie: t ma
xima arboꝫ varietate sidera lambentii plene: quas nunqꝫ foliis
privari credo. Quippe vidi eas ita videntes atqꝫ decoras ceu mē
se Maio in Hispania solent esse: quaz alie florētes alie fructuo
se: alie in alio statu. hñ vniuersitqꝫ qualitatē vigebant: garrie
bat philomela t alii passeris variis ac inūmeri mēse Novemb̄is
quo ipse per eas deambulabā. Sunt prieterea in dicta insula Joa
na septē vel octo palmaꝫ genera q̄ proceritate t pulchritudine
quēadmodū cetere oēs arbores: herbe: fructusqꝫ nfas facile exu
perat. Sunt t mirabiles pīnꝫ agri t prata vastissima: varie aues:
varia mella: variaqꝫ metalla ferro excepto. In ea aut quā Hispa
nam sup̄a diximꝫ nuncupari maximi sunt mōtes ac pulchri: va
sta rura: nemora: campi seracissimi serī pascioꝫ t pdendis edifici
is aptissimi. Portuū in hac insula cōmoditas t prēstantia flumi
nū copia salubritate admixta hoīm: q̄ nisi quis viderit: credulita
tez superat. Vnde arbores pascua t fructus multū ab illis Joane

differunt. Hec preterea Hispana diuerso aromatis genere. auro. metallisq; abundat. cuius quidem & oīum aliaꝝ quas ego vīdi & quāꝝ cognitionē habeo incole vtrīusq; sexus nudi semper incedunt quēadmodū edunt in lucem: preter aliquas feminas: qd fo-
lio frondeue aliqua aut bombicino velo pudenda operiunt: qd
ipse sibi ad id negocii parant. Carent ii oēs (vt supra dixi) quo-
cūꝝ genere ferri. carēt & armis vtpote sibi ignotis nec ad ea sūt
apti: nō ppter corporis deformitatem cū sint bene formati: sed
ga sunt timidi ac plenī formidine. gestant tñ pro armis arundi-
nes sole pustas: in quāꝝ radicibꝝ hostile quoddā ligneū siccū et
in mucronem attenuatū figunt. neq; iis audēt ingiter vti: nā se
pe euenit cū miserim duos vel tris boies ex meis ad aliquas vil-
las vt cū eaꝝ loquerent̄ incolis: exiisse agmen glomeratū ex In-
dis: & vbi nfos appropinquare videbant fugā celeriter arripuit:
se despretis a patre liberis & econtra. & hoc nō qd cuipiam eoꝝ dā-
num aliquō vel iniuria illata fuerit: imo ad quoscūꝝ appuli & qui-
bus cū verbum facere potui: quicqd habebā sum elargiti: s: pan-
num aliagq; pīulta nulla mībī facta versura: sed sunt natura pa-
uidi ac timidi. Ceterq; vbi se cernunt tūros oī metu repulso: sunt
admodum simplices ac bone fidei & in oībꝝ que habēt liberalissi-
mī: roganti qd possidet inficiāt nemo: quin ipsi nos ad id poscē-
dū inuitāc. Maximū erga oēs amoīc pīseferunt: dant queq; ma-
gīa pro paruis: minima l3 re nihiloue xtenti. ego attī. phibui ne-
rā minīa & nullī? precii bīsc darent: vt sunt lancis. parapsidū.
vitrigs fragmenta. itē clavī ligule. quāꝝ si hoc poterāt adipisci
videbat eis pulcherrima nūdī possidere iocalia. Accidit. n. quē
dam nauitam tantū aurī pōdūs habuisse pro vna ligula quanti
sunt tres aurei solidi. & sic alios pro altis minoris precii: pīsertim
pro blanquis nouis: quibusdā nūmīs aureis: p qd? habēdīs da-
bant quicquid petebat vēdīt: puta vnciam cū dimidia & duas
aurī: vel triginta & quadraginta bombicis pondo: quā ipsi iam
nouerant. itē arcuum. amphore. hydrie. dolitq; fragmenta bom-
bīc & auro tanq; bestie comparabant. quod quis iniquum same

erat vetus: dedicq; eis multa pulchia & grata que mecum: ulera nul-
lo interueniente premio: ut eos mihi facilius uictuarem fierentq;
epicole & ut sint prouis in amorem erga Regem Reginam principesq;
nostros & vniuersas gentes Hispanie ac studeant perquirere cos-
aceruare eaq; nobis tradere quib; ipsi affluunt & nos magnope
re indigemus. Nullam si norunt idolatriam: imo firmissime cre-
dunt oem vni: oem potentiam: oia deni: & bona esse in celo: meq;
Inde cum bis nauibus & nautis descendisse: atq; hoc animo vbiq;
fui susceptus postq; metum repulerant. Nec sunt segnes aut ru-
des: quin summi ac perspicacis ingenii: & homines qui transire
tant mare illud non sine admiratioe vniuersi: rei ratione redi-
dunt: sed nunq; riderunt gentes restitas neq; naues homoi. Ego
statim atq; ad mare illud perueni & prima insula quosd; Indos
violenter arripui: qui ediscerent a nobis & nos pariter docerent
ea quoq; ipsi in iste partibus cognitionem habebant: & ex roto
successit: nam breui nos ipsos: & si nos tum gestu ac signis: tum
verbis intellecerunt: magnoc; nobis fuerit emolumento: veniunt
modo mecum qui semper putant me desiluisse e celo: quavis diu
nobiscum versati fuerint hodieq; versentur. et si erant primi qui
Id quoc; appellabamus nuntiabant: aliis deinceps aliis elas-
ta voce dicentes: Uenite venite & videbitis geres ethereas. Qua
ob rem tam femine q; viri: tam impuberis q; adulti: tam iuuenes
q; senes deposita formidine paulo ante accepta nos certatim vise-
bant magna iter itipante caterua: aliis cibum: aliis potum affe-
rentibus maximo cum amore ac beniuolentia incredibili. Habet
unaqueq; insula multas scaphas solidi ligni: & si angustas. lon-
gitudine tñ ac forma nostris biremis similes: cursu aut velos-
tores. Reguntur remis tantummodo. Haq; quedaz sunt magne:
quedam parue: quedam in medio consistunt. Plures tñ biremi que
remiget duodeuiginti transtris maiores: cù quibus in oës illas
insulas: que innumere sunt: traicitur. cumq; is suam mercatu-
ram excent & inter eos comertia fiunt. Aliquas ego barum bi-
remi seu scaphaq; vidi q; rebebant septuaginta & octuaginta re-

magis. In omnibus sis insulis nulla est diversitas inter gentes
effigies: nulla in moribus atq; loquela: quin oes se intelligunt
ad inuicem: que res perutilis est ad id qd serenissimos Reges no-
stros exoptare precipue reor: scz eoz ad sciam xpi fidem pueris
nem. cui qdem quantu intelligere potui facillimi sunt et prouis.
Diri quemadmodum sum progressus antea insulam Jo: nam per re-
ctum tramitem occasus in orientem miliaris. cccxxii. fin quā viā
et interuallum itineris possum dicere hanc Joam esse maiorez
Anglia et Scotia simul. nāq; vltra dicta. cccxxii passuum milia in
ea parte que ad occidentem prospectat due: quas nō petui: super
sunt prouincie quaz alterā Indi Anan vocari cuius accolit
cavati nascuntur. Tendunt in longitudinez ad miliaria. clxx. ut
ab his quos rebo necū Indis percepī: qui ois baseallent insu-
las. Hispane ho ambit? maior est tota Hispania a Colonia usq;
ad fontem rabidum. Hincq; facile arguit q; quartum eius latus
quod ipse per rectā lineā occidentis in orientem traieci miliaria
continer-dz. Nec insula est affectanda et affectata nō spermenda
in qua et si aliaq; oī ut dixi pro inuictissimo Rege nostro solen-
niter possessionem accepi: earūq; imperium dicto Regi penitus
comittitur: in oī: tunio: i: tñ loco atq; omni lucro et cōmertio
condecenti cuiusdā magne ville: cui Natiuitatis dñi nomen de-
dimus: possessionem peculiariter accepi: ibiq; arcem quandam
erigere extemp'o iussi: que modo iam debet esse pacta: in qua bo-
mnes qui necessarii sunt visi cū omni aī moꝝ genere et vltra an-
num vīctu oportuno reliqui. Item quandā carauellā et p/o alīis
construendis tam in hac arte q; in ceteris peritos: ac eiusdē in-
sule Regis erga eos beniuolentiam et familiaritatē incredibiles
Sunt enim gentes ille amabiles admodum et benigne: eo q; Rex
predictus me fratre suū dici gloriabā. Et si aīum rei: oīarent et
s; qui in arce manserunt nocere relint: nequeunt: q; armis cal-
tent: nudi incedūt et nīmīu timidi: ideo dictā arcem tenētes dun-
tarat pñt totā eam insulam nullo sibi imīmēe discriminēe popu-
lari: dñmō leges quas dedim: ac regimen nō excedat. In oīb?

lis insulis ut intellexi quisq; vni tñ pugni acquiescit: preter pln
cipes aut reges: qbus viginti hie licet. Femine magis q; viri la-
borare videntur: nec bene potui intelligere an habeat bona pro-
pria: vidi enim q; unus habebat aliis impartiri: plesertim dapes
obsonia et hmoi. Nullum apud eos monstru reperi ut pleriq; exi-
stunabant: sed hoies magne reverentie atq; benignos. Nec sunt
nigri velut ethiopes: habent crines planos et demissos: non de-
gut vbi radioq; solaris emicat calor: magna namq; hic est solis
vehementia: propterea q; ab equinoctiali linea distat. Ubi viden-
tur g; adus sex et viginti et montiū cacuminiq;. Maximuū quoq;
viger frigus: sed id qdem moderantur Indi tum loci cosuetudi-
ne: tum reruū calidissimaq; quib; frequenter et luxuriose vescun-
t presidio. Itaq; mōstra aliqua nō vidi: neq; eoz alicubi habui co-
gnitionem: excepta quadā insula Charis nuncupata: que secun-
da ex H:spania in Indianam transfretantib; existit: quā gens que-
dam a finitimiis habita ferocior incolit. Hi carne humana vescū-
tur. Habant predicti biremū genera plurima qbus in oīs Indi-
cas insulas traiiciunt: depredant: surripiunt quecūq; pñt. Nihil
ab aliis differunt nisi q; gerūt more feminis longos crines: vtū-
tur arcub; et spiculis arundineis fixis ut dixim: in grossiori par-
te attenuatis hastilib;. ideoq; habent feroce: quare ceteri Indi
inexhausto metu plectunt: sed hos ego nihil facio plus q; alios
Hi sunt q; coheunt cū quibusdā feminis: que sole insulā Dateus
nī primā ex Hispania in Indianā traissentib; habitant. He aut
femine nullū sui sexus opus exercent: vtuntur enim arcubus et
spiculis sicut de eaq; pugnibus diri: muniunt sese laminis eneis
quaq; maxima apud eas copia existit. Aliā mibi insulā affirmat
sup adicta Hispania māsōrē: eius incole carēt pilis: auroq; inter
alias potissimū exuberat. Huius insule et aliaq; quas vidi hoies
mecū porto qui horū que dixi testimoniuū perhibet. Deniq; ut no-
stri discessus et celeris reuersionis compendiuū ac emolumentum
breuibus astringā hoc polliceor: me nostris Regibus inuictissi-
mis paruo eoz fultū auxilio: tantū auri daturū quantū eis fue-

rit opus. tñ vero aromatum bombicis. masticis: q̄ apud Ch̄lum
duntur at innenitur. tantiq̄ ligni aloes. tantum seruorum hydros/
latrarum: quantum eorum maiestas voluerit exigere. it: m̄ reu/
barbarum t̄ alia aromatum genera que ii quos in dicta arce reli
qui iam inuenisse atq̄ inuenturos existim̄. q̄ si quidem ego nul
libi magis sum moratus nisi quantum me coegerunt venti: p̄re/
ter q̄ in villa Ratiuitatis: dum arcez condere t̄ tuta oia esse pro
uidi. Que t̄ si maxima t̄ inaudita sunt: multo tñ maiora forent
si naues m̄bi ut ratio exigit subuenissent. Q̄ ex muli: um ac mira
bile hoc: nec nostris meritis correspondens: sed sancte Ch̄ristias
ne fidei: nostro: umq̄ Regum pietatis ac religioni: quia quod hu
manus consequi nō poterat intellectus: id h̄ manus cōcessit dī
uinus. Solet enim deus seruus suos: quiq̄ sua precepta diligunt
t̄ in impossibilibus exaudire: ut nobis in presentia contigit: qui
ea consecuti sumus a que hactenus mortalium vires minime atti
gerant: nam si harū insulaq̄ quipiam aliquid scripserunt aut lo
cuti sunt: omnes per ambages t̄ cōjecturas: nemo se eas vidisse
asserit: vnde prop̄ v̄ debatur fabula. Igitur Rex t̄ Regina prin
cep̄sq̄ ac eorū regna felicissima cuncteq̄ ali: Christianoq̄ pronin
cie Saluatori dño nostro Iesu Christo agam⁹ gratias: qui tan
ta nos victoria munereq̄ donauit: celebrentur processiones: per
agantur solennia sacra: festaq̄ fronde velentur delubra: exultet
Christus in terris quemadmodum in celis exultat: quom tot po
pulo: um perditas ante hac animas salvatum iri preuidet. Lete
mur t̄ nos: cum propter exaltationem nostre fidei: tum propter
rerum temporalium incrementa: quoq̄ non solum Hispania sed
vniuersa Christianitas est futura particeps. Hec ut gesta sunt
sic breuiter enarrata. Vale. Ulis bone pridie Idus Martis.

Christoforus Colom Oceane classis p̄fectus.

¶ Epigramma. R. L. de Coibaria Episcopi Montispalustri.
Ad Invictissimum Regem Hispaniarum.

Jam nulla Hispanis tellus addenda Triumphis
Atq[ue] parum tantis viribus orbis erat.
Avunc longe Eois regio depensa sub vnde.
Auctura est titulos Berice magne tuos
Urde repertozi merito referenda Colombo
Gratia: sed summo est maior babeda deo.
Qui vincenda parat noua Regna tibiq[ue] fibiq[ue]
Teq[ue] simul fortem prestat et esse pium.

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